

22 December 2017

Director of FORUM-ASIA denied entry into India

On 19 December 2017, **Mukunda Raj Kattel**, Director of The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) was denied entry into India and, after being arbitrarily detained for 18 hours, sent back to Bangkok from Tiruchirappalli International Airport, Tamil Nadu, India

[Mukunda Raj Kattel](#) is the director of **The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)**, a regional human rights organisation based in Bangkok, and has been involved with several human rights initiatives over the last 20 years. He has also worked as a senior advisor at the Danish International Development Agency's Human Rights and Good Governance Program in Nepal. He is one of the two Directors of FORUM-ASIA and is based at the secretariat in Bangkok, Thailand.

On 20 December 2017, Mukunda Raj Kattel was sent back to Bangkok at around 10:30 pm after having been held inside the airport for 18 hours. He was not allowed to communicate with his family and friends, and was denied access to a lawyer. No reasons were given for his denial of entry or detention despite multiple requests.

On 19 December 2017, the defender arrived at Tiruchirappalli International Airport at approximately 11:30 pm. A driver who was at the airport to meet him informed his local host that Mukunda had not left the airport. It was only after calling the airlines Mukunda had traveled with that they found out that he was barred from entering India by an immigration officer and was being held inside. His local host's repeated efforts to contact Mukunda and send a lawyer were quashed by airport authorities.

As a Nepali citizen, the human rights defender does not require a visa to travel to India. The Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the two countries enables Nepali and Indian citizens to move freely across the border without a passport or visa, and to live and work in either country.

Front Line Defenders strongly condemns the denial of entry and arbitrary detention of human rights defender Mukunda Raj Kattel, which it believes is solely motivated by his peaceful and legitimate work for human rights.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in India to:

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the circumstances under which Mukunda Raj Kattel was detained for 18 hours and denied entry into India;
2. Immediately and unconditionally remove all restrictions on the free movement of Mukunda Raj Kattel, as it is believed that these measures are not only solely related to his legitimate human rights activities but, furthermore, constitute a direct transgression of the rights of Mukunda Raj Kattel;

3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in India, foreign and local, are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.